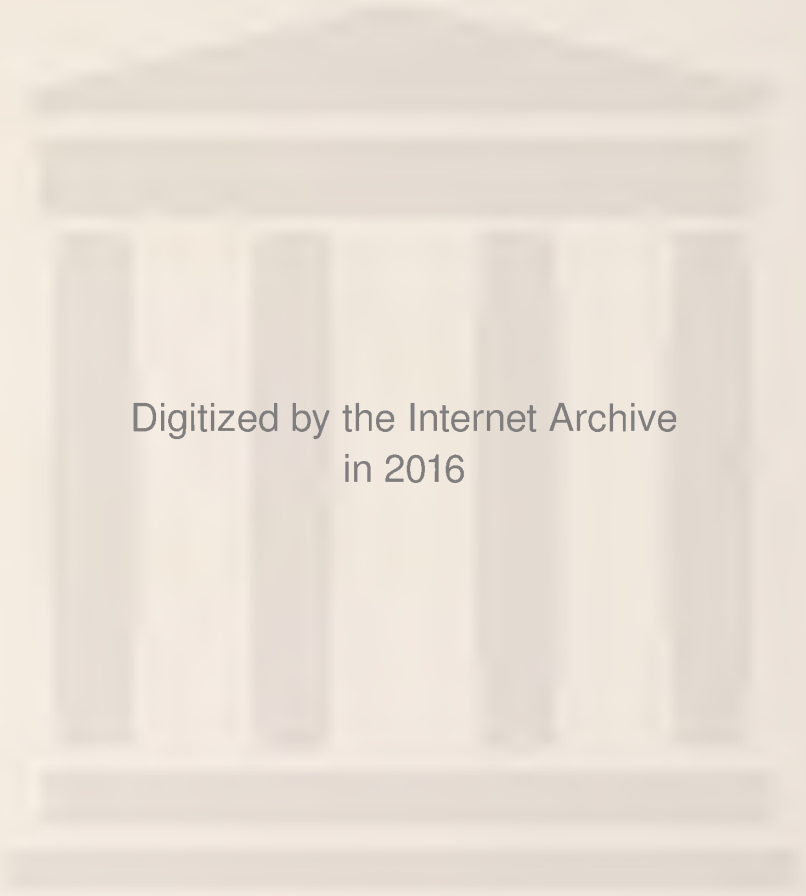

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calvert

I wanted to let you know
the trees that grow along the road between our houses
are the trees of paradise

--Keith Ramsey

COVER BY *MICHAEL SALSER*

calvert

fall 1976

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HENRY ADAMS' WIFE

Silk embroidered in the parlour
the thistle of Sorrow
the columbine of the Holy Ghost
the rose of Victory and the carnation of Love
are pressed in glass.
The rock of Power and Permanence
and the evergreen unwilting
point upwards.
Henry Adams' wife is floating stiffly toward placid waters.
Her grief has a moral touch.
The braided hair is real,
will be real for a long time afterwards.
How the children point to the story
the urn decorated in silver boullion
the little lamb stitched in wool, and
the severed oak.

She sat in this chair
once left a stain on the brocade
which couldn't be cleaned,
a perverse butterfly of blood
where she was sitting.
Long afterwards she kneels,
she scratches it with her finger nail
but it has dried.

Now in Rock Creek Cemetery
the rain touches her angel,
its stone face worn smooth with raining.

--Ruthellen Quillen

What mouths have
taken apples
when the dawn has
risen
horseless
grey as the swallows
that never disappear
never carry from
the orchard
what is here

--David Hickman

REGENESIS

Eve:

When I was leaf
you gave me water
and I breathed it,

when I was fish
you gave me air
and I swam it,

when I was bird
you gave me flame
and I flew in it,

when I was earth
you gave me man.
And I held him.

Adam:

When I was air
you gave me birds,
and they lay upon me,

when I was bird
you gave me twigs
and river bottom,

when I was earth
you gave me flesh
and it slept on me,

when I was bone
you gave me fire,
and water, and leaf.

Eden:

When I was fire
you gave me birds
and they lay upon me,
and it was good.

When I was bird
you gave me flesh
and river's hair,
and it was good.

When I was earth
you gave me darkness
and it lay upon me,
and it was in the beginning.

--Suzanne Marie Hobbs

UPON THE JANUARY MOON IN LEO

saturday night, the moon is full
and getting down to it the beat
of dance scatters money to the winds
about the dance floor, hoppa-boppa
in the morning too, sweet mama, of
our discontent and naked as the forest
in cold blue moon while howling wolf
will one day sweet sweet the back
of our ass and leave the lovely jumble
rock-rolled under-over like jesus
nailed up-side-down, his oak cross
heavy, in the spin now, wrap
your legs tightly across the sky
and spell your name--in neon this time.

--Bob Hoehn

ANYA

She takes her dreams, if they are,
but returns them to the Studio,
and, waking alone,
does what she can
before brushing her teeth.
(The city is wide, Monsieur,
The body, a craven hollow.)

This way, trolloped and slept,
makes a pageant underfoot--
pulses as an unstruck animal!
The body, Comrade,
(singular and beautiful)
can also be had as syllable.

--Desiré Weidaw

SATURNO

was in the sky above the courtyard
so we hauled out the telescope

Carlos played with the campass
and we looked at Saturn
her rings and satelites
she seemed a jewell spinning in the watch of time

immediately metaphor uninhibits and limits imagination
and with my eye on Saturn's gentle rings pendant moons
my hands at work at wheels to compensate our earthly spin
my mind wanders to campers' refuse on the moon
and just how delicate is this timepiece

Carlos for instance always gets within a quarter of an hour
because he knows how it runs day to day
the earth wobbles something fierce
what child has never spun a top
who has never spun a coin

when Carlos looks out to check the time though
he looks out from a focal point within the watch
a centering device
but he is also the circumference
metaphor limits
but Saturn with delicate rings
just goes on spinning

--Keith Ramsey

HOW TO PLAY GOD

Take a clump of earth in your hand.
There will be bits of rock, root, and bone.
Squeeze this clump until you form a planet.
But remember: there will have to be rules
and they must apply to you too.
So scribble on a cracker crumb
and they will call it Commandments.
When you laugh, it must be from the belly,
so that they can call it thunder.
And when they cry out for help
have a good time: pick your nose
and they will call it manna.

Now if you need money, join the circus
and juggle oranges, grape-fruit, and earth.
They will call it a solar system.
When they need help you will be busy.
But they won't stop trying
with their alters of rock, root, and bone
and all those stinky sacrifices.
Sooner or later they'll build a telescope
to look at the big top
and call it a universe.
But when they build rockets
you'll get out the flyswatter.

That afternoon the fireeater might sneeze.
You'll say gesundheit to him
but it's judgement day to them.

--Jim Maher

SAYING NOTHING WITH YELLOW

Forsythias, sunflowers, lashing spashing--

Blowsy with fever, these flowers
Flog the canaries. The sun-throated birds

Send out sallow shrieks, melting
In the distance, like butter.

Irascable, chimpanzies chide their children
For eating red fruits or drinking from blue waters,

They are married to yellow:
A sweet and sour marriage.

Elderly sheep, mustering soft, sunny baas, knit
The natives saffron blouses from their woolly backs

And pearl the collars with corn,
Or, the extravagance of topaz.

Thick-hipped women serve mangos and bananas in baskets.
The grapefruits are vivid with vitamins.

Men slice lemons with slashes of silver,
So cooly, sucking the juices with tooth and tongue.

The natives' pallor is a wondrous flower, like buttercups
Held beneath a child's chin.

They are happy in yellowness. Their smiles are
Slices of moon, rising.

--Bill Gorski

THE SUN WITHIN HIM

Rion Colston was not born, he thought, but he had been shot from a cannon and twenty-three years later, on an October dawn, he sat grinning . . . laughing with arms folded across his chest, his legs crossed and his feet tucked under them, on top of a freight train boxcar which was hurtling into the morning sun and into a town unknown to the train's only passenger. He sat there leaning into the wind like the confident bull dog on a Mack truck, conscious, beaming, and feverish, but above all, he thought, conscious; and on this particular morning he was victorious in his war with complacency . . . with those mortals who "passed time and made livings and got drunk" and these were their words if not their creed. They were those vacuous faces slouching in front of the courthouse and those thick feet dawdling through the streets when he left home impulsively, just two days ago. Sober and not angry but full of something, he had run right out of that town, right down Main Street, jumping and clicking his heels, right out the divided highway with its fixed green median and right past the Evermore Drive-In Restaurant where natives were jerking ketchup bottles. He thought, now in exhilaration, that he had shouted, "Life. . . I'm going to live it not pass it," but he knew as he had shouted nothing at all, but truly, he had felt it. Rion Colston, with a half-grin twisted and tucked into his cheek, producing a deep dimple which he seemed to hold, and with a brow that was always tight but now tighter, fell into something. He dropped his arms and placed his hands on his knees, and his mind assumed the cadence of the train.

He remembered his town and some of its people whom he knew and loved. Did it never occur to them to live to sense, to taste and create. To breathe. To walk. To just look at something and see it . . . see it so intensely that they become a part of it, perceiving, realizing, loving it. The only human experience they shared thoroughly, consistently, yet half-heartedly, was dying. How did they go to bed . . . just to pass time or to get rid of something. He and the train and the sun were one. But they looked at a masterpiece as if it were a parking meter, the same way they looked at each other and just as they ate the Bomb sandwich at the Evermore, according to their unconscious creed . . . to get it overwith.

Would God forgive them. Well He certainly wouldn't invite them to dinner, Rion mused, as he sat ruggedly on the boxcar roof clenching his fists. Under the influence of the train, he wondered . . . perhaps they were the off-spring of unvital, unknowing, rompless bed and that it was an hereditary condition whereby no blood and throbbing fiber were passed on, but only phlegm. That was it. Rion Colston was as he now considered a bucking broneo to be, the direct offspring of a bucking, romping, totally

fulfilling art. It was a romping but flowing art like the train ride itself.

The grin tucked into the confident cheek burst into laughter. Now he recalled the day when he had been shot from a cannon and he remembered it well. He had shot forth bawling, laughing, brawling and he was grand and slapped himself and with a dynamic, gleaming eye he had looked up at the doctor as if to say, "Kiss it, mister." And Colston was now alive with rollicking laughter and he genuinely wanted the whole countryside to laugh with him as he was consciously living life on a boxcar roof in the great awakening of an American, autumn morning. Life was all orange and sharp yellow and even lavender and tender, now, and Rion Colston was there to put romance in life and the mountains like bleu cheese on a tossed salad.

As he sat there, high, on the roof of a train, he was consuming a ritual . . . tasting the cool autumn sun and the sweet oxygen pressed into his face, as had his college room mate sat in front of Humphrey Bogart movies with a bottle of ginger ale, a half-gallon of ice cream and two pounds of pop corn, savoring each little gasp, much as King Faruk with his last cooked chicken.

The train was slowing down as was the cadence of the mind of Rion. They were entering a railroad yard and a trainman with pink false fat lying around his neck, his pinochle hand still cramped in his left fist and his lantern in his right, was bouncing and mumbling along. Apparently, he had not noticed the sun was up and that it was daylight when he sprang from his card game in the poorly lighted shanty to throw a switch along the tracks. A fusee fell from his side pocket and he heard it hit the cinders and the round man painfully stooped to pick it up. With that a pencil was dislodged from its narrow pocket in the bib of his overalls. Cursing, he placed the lantern on the cinder path, picked up the pencil, stuck it in the slim pocket, stuffed the cards in his hip pocket, grabbed the lantern and with a grimace, stood up.

Rion had lowered himself to the ladder on the side of the car and with his feet not very firmly planted on the bottom rung, he stood suspended from the boxcar, with one hand holding onto a rung shoulder high. The great locomotive was hissing and sluggishly coming to a halt. The mighty contraction of the train shook Colston and he started to feel slightly uneasy, as if something . . . a great deal had gone out of him.

The fat yardman saw him and he came griping through the cinders, his lantern ascending scornfully. Colston had a sudden twinge, an almost fainting sensation which was partly the result of an empty stomach and the surprising, jeering provocation of this funny man with his lantern like that of Diogenes who had searched the world day and night with his lamp, searching for an honest man. Rion Colston felt like a fugitive, appeared to be one; and although he knew he was not, he felt a sense of guilt and uncertain dishonesty.

The train took the first of the final long and short jolts. And Colston,

whose moistened hand had loosened and eyes had frozen in a daze, fell on top of the fat man who was scolding with his lantern; and the lantern had planted itself with assertion, well into Colston's solar plexus. And Rion was experiencing humility and discomfort, as he stood breathless, almost frantic. He looked like a fool as well as a fugitive, and he received no comfort from the trainman whose high squeaky voice yelped rasp notes of aggravation at him and no doubt at the pencil and fusee dropped moments before.

"What the hell is wrong with you . . . the whole lot of you . . huh? I'll tell yuh, you're in a goddam daze . . . all of yuh and it ain't natural either . . . you're all doped up or drunk and yuh don't give a goddam. You're runnin' from somethin' or somebody. I seen'em come thru here before. Last week we found four of 'em . . . singers they said . . . spendin' time in a boxcar gittin' all doped up. That one last week wobbled 'roun' an' the girl had to lead him 'roun' an' he up and says he can fly and jest let 'im be . . . Christ! she looked more like a boy than he did. Look here kid . . . there's damn little tolerance in here between these tracks and I seen men worked twenty years git banged up and chopped up. I picked up a man's leg wunst. And I sued the company twict my ownself for injuries. Goddam it boy wise up."

Looking down at the man, Rion wanted to tell him that he was sober and that he loved the earth and the sun and the morning; he was only intoxicated with a good feeling, a good feeling about life. He felt awkward and said only, "Excuse me," and stared off over the man who shuffled on, crunching cinders. That man had knocked the wind out of him. His hands in his pockets, Rion crossed the tracks. With his damp cropped hair wiped across his forehead, his face coated with soot and colored by the sun and wind, he began to ponder the breathtaking lantern.

He remembered old Mr. Kinard in biology class, digressing on what he called the anatomy of a fool. He said that for some people, the emptiness . . . the hollowness of post intoxication would generally be a severe enough blow to the solar plexus of a puffed up ego. In a few, he went on, that might be just enough to put both feet back on the ground. For many, however, it takes a good sock in the chest . . . right square in the solar plexus. That region is one of the certain areas of the nervous system which exist outside of the brain and spinal cord and it is composed of sympathetic nerves. If you get hit there, solidly, the heart beats faster and you are briefly humble. "Ah, and how effective it is," he would say. "About every other day, you should punch each other in the chest and then for awhile, just a little while, you'd know just who you are and what you are not." Colston smiled and lightly suggested to himself that it was not of permanent value, because on the alternate day, he would still be a man who wanted to hop trains and ride off in all directions.

He walked out of the railroad yard across a parking lot and turned onto a long unattractive street which led to an avenue that he could see at the

top of the hill. The avenue had a yellow canopy formed by wide oak leaves which were whispering hoarsely, senatorially in the breeze. He walked down that avenue until there were no more trees. Stopping under the last oak, he thought of home and the sour lovely smell of nearby orchards and warm mince pie and his setter Erin. And how for four years of college and two years of the army, he had longed to return to all that with books and paintings; and how he would just curl up there in the fall, in a classroom, rambling about literature and painting, hunting and reading on weekends and in the evenings.

And then there was the girl who did not wait. She had taken a lot out of home and the mountains. He turned up a street without trees and thought about her and he felt it was unmanly now after three years of not even a glimpse of her. She had married well and moved from town but she was still there for him, and he avoided certain streets and people and even a cove where they used to go in the mountains. They sat there and watched the deer, and he would grow feverish over the deer and over her and she pretended to share. Everything he loved, everyone he loved, just loving itself, he felt when he was with the deer; and although he could no longer return to the cove, he could not resist the deer and returning to them in other places.

Breathing deeply, Rion started walking quickly. Up hills, down hills and around long tree lined curves, across a football field and into a park. He walked, ran, and he felt better in the park. There was a musuem in the park which was reflected by a lake with swans gliding across its cold sun-topped surface. Smiling at his pedantry, he thought of Yeats' "Swans at Coole." The caretaker was opening a side door to the Georgian building to get a wheelbarrow and some shovels.

"What time do you open up?" Rion asked.

The old man had a kind face, as he looked up with warm surprise.

"Eh-eh...yes indeed young feller .. eh .. a man that gits hisself up early and gits ther . . yuh know . . why yuh gotta let 'im in. I bet yuh wanna see that little school exhibit. Darn good one this year . . why I've seen 'em all . . purt' nears anyway. I'd like to see them kids work their way up to oils from finger paintin' and all and we'd have more local stuff represented . . . but yuh know they lose it 'roun' here anyways . . yuh look like you might dabble in paints or somethin' . . . bet you'd like too at least?"

Rion looked at the man kindly, "Yeh, I'd like that."

"Eh-eh . . . now you git on in there an' down the first hallway twenty-six steps an' turn right in two farmer's steps an' then you'll be lookin' at a genuine rip-firin' Remington . . . an' then yuh go down that marble staircase to the Martin Room . . . to that exhibit, eh?"

Rion Colston hurried past the Remington and was slightly concerned that he could not share the old man's enthusiasm for it. He was un-American when it came to Remington and the West. He paused by a rack of prints and flipped through them. The first find was "The Smoker" by

Adriaen Brouwer. Surely the reproduction was only a faded suggestion of the vitality and ruddy complexion of the original which he thought was in the Louvre; but he was warmed by prints and the possibilities, one day, of Paris and London. He sat down on a seventeenth century Flemish bench near the print rack and settled there. Day-dreaming, he saw Manet's "A Bar at the Folies-Bergere" which he knew only from a thirty-five cent reproduction. In contrast to that elegant and lively reflection in Manet's clever mirror, he saw his people in taverns, slumped and staring unconsciously at themselves. Last Spring, he had been swept up by the fete galante settings of Watteau and the later scenes by the Impressionists. Shimmering spots of light played through trees in Renoir's "Moulin de la Galette" and warmed people who were alive and living well. Alive, he raced off on horses, first Degas, in thick bold lines of eye-blending pastels, then Nadelman, in stylized yet classical sculpture with head reared back in sleek motion clean and swift. Eyes closed, he could hear the rhapsodic descent of "Peer Gynt" fading down the mountainside.

He stood up, stretched his arms, and walked over to the rack and to a typical Utrillo scene which in all its naivety, is quite urbane with Magny's at the end of a narrow Parisien street; but it mysteriously stimulated a nostalgic discomfort and at the same time a rural delight in Colston. . . he heard dry noisy corn stalks, and saw crackerbarrels in snow. He smiled, puzzled by this identification with antiquity which he experienced in the Autumn.

Rion forgot the school exhibit as he hurried outside. Spotting the caretaker down by the lake, he called, "Thank you and God bless you." He had never said that to anyone before and he felt awkward. He walked briskly, feeling very comfortable as he moved around the lower end of the lake, sinking into the dampness beneath the crisp leaves. Crossing a small sunwashed bridge, he proceeded up a flight of cement steps to a boulevard with benches and sycamore trees and white bullet shaped trash containers. He sat down on a sunny bench and cupped his hands around his face, his elbows on his knees.

Moments later, an old man chuckling to himself came up and sat down on the other end of the bench and opened "The Morning Times." A young lady came walking, walking so lovely and carefree, revealing all of her vitality and grace and pleasure of the morning, seeming to enjoy each step. She caressed the flipped wave around her neck and lifted it with her excellent slender hand, as if liberating herself. For a second, Rion saw her in those spiked heels from the Fifties, treading gracefully across celluloid. No, she had her feet on the ground and she was delightful and she was walking right through his life and he swelled with the possibility of remembering her, always.

He looked over at the old man, "How-ya-doin' pal?"

"Why, wha-duh-yuh-say me boy. It's Battle Burns in the fifth, if me lad Gordon can ride her out; and further I'll lay yuh ten to one odds that one

out of the next ten cars acomin' down the street is a Volkswagon. 'Tis the seventh of the month is it not me lad, an' let me tell yuh, I was born on the seventh day of our seventh month July, 'twas . . . and when me was seven I went to the track with me father in the old country and I says to the old man, 'Father, me old man, I want to wager the seventh horse in the seventh race and if it be possible, I wonder what you can afford me to place on this sterling beast.' An' yuh know me lad dun yuh, the bloody beast came in seventh. But now 'tis not as bad me boy as me first horse in the point-to-point, when I was only one year old . . . she dropped dead on the first turn."

"Excuse me, my friend," Rion laughingly interrupted, "and I do hope you and the railroader and the old caretaker and that charming young lady will forgive me; but for awhile I was a hundred years old. And now I'm late for something . . . I'd love to stay and listen all day, but I'm late. . . late for a train home. God bless you, my friend."

Rion Colston ran out of the unknown town, jumping and clicking his heels and shouting to himself, "I'm going home . . . to live to work and to watch deer and to sit in front of the courthouse occasionally." He shouted all that over and over and he felt very comfortable.

Lawrence Angle

Grains of sand
all so small
become smaller
and smaller

until we call
them atoms
and particles
with attributes of strangeness

energy holds everything
together
in a form of order
no one can explain.

--Daniel Vance

REFLEX

Teeth of the clips
hold the galyxes
monitoring
each micrometer of motion
toward the sun:
a graph records
the excited wax
of blossoms
and their waning
at the edge of night.
I present a flame
too close
to its sepals
and the stylus trembles
across the drum:
leaving an ink trail
like spread fingers
of a startled infant.

--Patricia Gayet

PEACE COURT

My children have all changed their names
and gone to live in Taipei.

The university has retired its old astronomers.

The book I wrote was called Peace Court
and I think of the place now. For miles
the hills run wide and green as fairy tales
and wind lifts the flowers
into the infant clouds and sky as blue as milk
and all the animals find their way home.

The evening traffic is speaking chinese.

It is autumn and I will fall asleep soon.

The stars speed away from a sinking galaxie
and blood swallows all the leaves.

--Patrick McGrath

SUMMIT

In the golden
tones of bourbon
sunlight primes
the broken afternoon.
Lean back, hook your heels
on the railing
here beneath
the sky without end.

When the evening slacks
its grey grip
the afterdusk comes
on. A chill
settles in and a star
prodded by the darkness
wobbles out. Hunch
your back
and witness
the sky without end.

The moon awash
in aura begins glinting
like a tin-plate trinket
flung for spite
from a god-child's pocket.
Annoint yourself with spine blossoms
feel yourself rise
within
the sky without end.

--Miles Maguire

ISCARIOT

you cupped your hands
around a wish evaporating.

you longed for knots
squared and definite
as barabus' bracelets
or a rosebush bent around your skull,
to leave an impression of your face on every ragged petal.

chiseled,
driven to a raw tree,
the hemp extension snapped.

silver spilled through moonlight,
into your swinging shadow.

crosstown,
another had others do
what you took upon yourself.

eyes rolled back to ebony
you unlocked the gates;
made free the passageway.

Gethsemane, the stolen kiss
of infamy had brought you this.

--James C. Redmond

TEDIUM
(A GAME)

Go ahead, he said:
see what you can do
with me:

try me:

I am not your simple jigsaw
with all the pieces
together in just a matter of time

nor a mystery with a clue
hidden, nor a who-dunnit

nor an equation
for the clever to calculate;

my game
is a series of infinite tasks
of force and counterforce:

draw a perfect square
watching the paper in the mirror
only, and by the mirror only
place the marbles in formation;
balance the small rods.

The winner is the right-hander
performing longest and most unerringly
left-handed
or vice versa.

Let's see how you do
working against your nature.

BACK AGAIN

As I stand in the arches of France's triumphs
And sleep beneath the blessed dispute of Vienna's parliamentary statues;
I see the progress of 3000 years
    and return to a land, vast
    where age is fed to efficency.
These gargoyles from pillard castles, late climb up ripple-cobbled roads lie
    in the land of four tongues and five hatreds
    spotted cows and terraced white wine.
Through the carved marble under my palm
Through the scarlet blood light strained through musky church windows
    you have put a hard love of your age inside me.
Now I'm resurrounded by youth.
The young culture cloaks my jean and jacketed American body.
All the nights in dark taverns and the mornings in keystoned cathedrals
And the babble of a thousand foreign lovers and sages,
                the whole, in isolation, exploded.
I feel the tender memories of the ancients
As shrapnel
Ripping at any pleasantness of my youthful days.
                Yet in this vastness is my home.
The alpine mist no longer hovers about my knees.
And now the clock, and not the bird, leads slumber from my arms.

--Rhonda Framm

THE DEAF MUTE

There is a silence where hath been no sound,
There is a silence where no sound may be,
In the cold grave-under the deep, deep sea,
Or in wide desert where no life is found,
Which hath been mute, and still must sleep profound;
No voice is hushed-no life treads silently,
But clouds and cloudy shadows wander free,
That never spoke, over the idle ground:
But in green ruins, in the desolate walls,
Of antique palaces, where Man hath been,
Though the dun fox or wild hyaena calls,
And owls, that flit continually between,
Shriek to the echo, and the low winds moan-
There the true silence is, self-conscious and alone.

"Silence" by Thomas Hood

In the hospital corridor a group of people gathered before the thick glass wall, waiting for the next newborns to be displayed on the other side. At first, Rachel Shelley tried to ease herself gently through the people, toward the window. But in their absorption in watching the babies they remained unmoving, a single mass. So Rachel began to push and jostle, nudging each person aside until finally, amid scowls and hot breathing curses, she reached the front and touched her palms to the glass. She disliked having to act so, but when people took no notice of her she had no other choice. She could not say to them, Excuse me, that's my sister's baby, see him, the third one back?

Judith had given birth to a son this morning and Rachel had travelled all the way into the city to see him. She did not like coming to the city. And there he was, asleep beneath the white blanket, his scarlet face turned slightly toward her. Rachel looked at his hands, clenched into fists, as though he were preparing himself for a fight while he slept his first sleep. Then she looked at his ears, bunched and misshapen, and her heart fluttered and sank. But she immediately recovered with the knowledge that the outward appearance meant nothing. She realized, too, that his ears would look perfectly normal tomorrow. The baby opened his eyes, and seeing the spectators looking at him, contorted his face, opened his mouth, and began flailing his arms. Rachel felt the glass vibrate against

her hands. And she remembered the birth of her own son, Matthew, many years ago.

The doctor passed her a note asking whether she wanted anesthesia. He added, that with anesthesia she would not feel anything, any pain. When she read the note she looked up at him right away and shook her head, no, she did not want that. She handed the slip of paper back to him with the answer that she was afraid of sleep. What she wrote was not a lie, although it was not the complete truth. It was not so much her fear of sleep as it was her fear of the light in her room being turned off. As a girl, that had always seemed to be the final darkness - which annihilated the world of senses- and, in her mind, rendered her no different than the plant in her room or the rock outside her window. She had been afraid of darkness ever since the morning when she was a year old and had awakened into the utter and terrific silence which, now, thirty years later, still held her. All she had expected to discover that morning was that her mumps had gone away. "Rachel, the doctor says the worst is over. You should be better in the morning. Sleep well, hon," her mother's last words to her the night before. That night Rachel had dreamed she was being chased along a dark, narrow street by a huge, ugly giant who held a pair of cymbals in his hands. But she could not get away from him; the faster she moved her legs the closer he got, all the while hitting the cymbals together. At first the sound was soft and muffled but as he came nearer the sound grew louder and the claps of the cymbals came closer together. Finally she stumbled and fell to the pavement. She looked up and saw the giant standing over her, bending down, and bringing the cymbals together for one final thumdering crash. As they struck, the sound pierced her. The air began to vibrate and light replaced the darkness along the street. Even when she held her hands over her ears she could still hear the crashing sound, penetrating and unendurable. It travelled down her arms into her hands, through her legs into her feet, and it rang and shook her whole body. Then it returned, repeating itself in her head, like an echo, until it diminished in a final whirling, hissing, whistling end. and she awoke to see her mother sitting on the edge of the bed, moving her lips.

The nurse walked over to the baby and tried to pacify him. Rachel did not know what she was saying because only the corner of the nurse's mouth was visible. He was a pretty child and Judith had told her he was healthy. Rachel knew that it was silly to have been so worried about his ears. There was no history of deafness in her family. She was the only deaf one. A severe case of the mumps, she would write whenever she was asked how and why. But she could only tell them how. And it was the truth, although maybe not all of it because she had never known anyone else who had become deaf from mumps. She had always suspected that her ears had been weak from birth and it took the mumps to burst them entirely. She sometimes wondered why people wanted to know at all.

Being asked always seemed to imply that the how and the why mattered. To her it did not matter. It was, so it is, she would think. The how and the why seemed to matter more to others.

Someone had once written her a note asking if she was ever resentful or envious of those who could speak. Not until she had read those words had she ever thought of them in terms of herself. She was not resentful because it was not anyone's fault that she was deaf. And of envy, well, so many years had passed since she had heard, she no longer remembered the sounds of words-except in her dreams-but she knew she didn't really hear those words. And most of the dreams faded from her memory except that one dream, of the giant with the cymbals. She probably would have forgotten it had it not repeated itself often, so often that it seemed to Rachel something which had actually happened to her. And she certainly could not feel envious of someone who could speak. She had never learned. Envy meant the desire for some advantage possessed by another: not that she would have the advantage also, but that she would have it instead of the other person. She knew that that could never be. She had never spoken, nor would she ever, so why should she be envious? But the slip of paper he had handed her was too small for so many such thoughts. So she wrote only: No, I am not resentful or envious, I only thank God my child is healthy and can hear. And Rachel had thought that that was all the truth there was for such a large question and such a small piece of paper.

She felt the same way about the doctor's question. She gave him the answer he would be most likely to understand. The real reason she kept inside, not because of the smallness of the paper, but because the reason was private. All the paper there was would not have helped her make him understand. Some things were like that. She had been trained to speak in the manual signs and she did not feel comfortable in written words. The presence of so many dark permanent words often confused her, causing her to lose track of her thoughts. She could never feel the words within her body as she could the signs. Words seemed to her to lack vitality, lying flat and cold on the page, waiting for her to come to them. When she had to approach them she found that she could grasp their meaning better by imagining she was making the corresponding sign with her hands. Only in this way could she fully experience the meaning of the word. If the doctor had been able to understand the signs maybe she would have tried to tell him her reason for not wanting anesthesia. But she was afraid that if she tried with written words she would only confuse him, and herself as well, thereby obscuring the truth of the reason. But she knew in her mind there was an unshakeable certainty which prevailed over words. Her child was conceived in silence and had grown inside her in the same silence: his own embryonic silence, and her outer silence. After his birth his silence would be broken, she had prayed, but hers would remain. And Rachel knew there was nothing she could to to alter

this truth. She thought long about it during the first months of her pregnancy. But it was not until she first felt him kick inside of her that she decided what she must do. She must see him being born.

The recognition was as swift and instantaneous as her child's kick. There could be no darkness, no sleep. For the remainder of her life and his, there would be silence. She would never hear him. She would have to see him as he left the muteness of her body and entered the world of sound.

In the delivery room, when she felt the pain close around her she heard it as the first sound of her child's voice. Then she raised up on her hands to watch this other part of his life begin. As she opened and he came out, slowly and hesitantly, she saw through the diffusing pain what was taking place. After she saw him pass completely and fully from her she reached forward and placed both hands on, feeling the rapid beating of his heart also, as the doctor severed the scarlet cord of flesh which united them. Then, like Judith's baby before her now, he opened his mouth, quivered, and she felt the vibrations inside her of his triumphal cry. Lying back down she thought that his birth was a restoration of the voice which had been hushed in her. She saw, behind her closed eyes, her family pass before her as in a procession of voices. After they passed there was a gap, and then she saw herself, first as a child, then as an adult, making her signs, straggling behind them still, yet not allowing the gap to widen. Then she saw her baby-beside her-not ahead with the others, nor behind, but right beside her. And there he had stayed for six years: he bringing her as far into the child's world of sound as she would ever go: she teaching him in her own way the rewards of the silent world.

Together they were a reversal of her mother and herself: Rachel, the deaf mother and Matthew, the hearing child. But the difference was deeper than merely that. The affliction did not come between Rachel and Matthew. She knew that she had borne her burden with more patience and compassion than her mother had. She remembered her mother's crying, and anguished look seeming to say, oh child, why? why, my poor baby, why can't you hear me or speak to me? why has this happened to me? And nearly every week for two years being taken to a new and strange doctor who always said no as if he were really the same doctor.

When Rachel learned the manual signs she saw that her mother was not as enthusiastic in learning them. When her mother failed to say with the signs what she wanted to say, she would always reach for the pencil and paper. But Matthew learned the signs, and often she smiled to herself that he could use them better than she could. Yes, she thought, he had endured further into her world than she had into his. Occasionally this thought distressed her but then she would remember the question about resentment and envy, and she would become angry with herself for being so selfish. She knew that Matthew did not feel that way toward her. He was as patient and compassionate as she.

Rachel had feared that Matthew would become retarded in speech, not from birth, but from living in a silent home. She knew that a child learns to speak by hearing others speak. But in her home there would be no speech for him to hear; her husband, Henry, was also deaf and mute. so she had kept that thought in the back of her mind when, after her father had died, she had asked her mother if, rather than going on living by herself, she wouldn't like to come and live in her home. Judith, after discussing it with Rachel, had convinced her mother that it would be a good idea. Rachel was three months due when her mother had moved in, and she wondered whether her mother had realized that what she had been deprived of more than twenty years earlier was then being restored to her. She was to teach a child to talk.

Rachel felt someone tapping her on the shoulder. She turned and saw a nurse speaking to her. After Rachel pointed to her own ears and mouth the nurse acknowledged that she understood. the nurse made two opposite intersecting circles with the first two fingers of each hand extended, pointed to her watch, touched her chest with her palms, and then brought them down horizontal in front of her-Visiting hours are over. Rachel nodded and turned back toward the window to see the baby once more before leaving. He was sleeping, his hands no longer clenched. She felt the tapping once again and turned, nodding. This time the nurse pointed her finger at Rachel, brought her hands into a loose, cupped parallel position in front of her, and then opened them as she pushed them outward in a forward sweeping motion-You must leave! Rachel nodded and started down the corridor. She looked back and saw the nurse walking away in the opposite direction. When Rachel came to Judith's room she went inside. Judith was sitting up reading a magazine. Rachel walked over to her, bent down and kissed her on the forehead, and signed that she had seen him-He is a beautiful child and I can see that he is healthy. Judith put down the magazine and signed-I think he looks like Matthew, don't you, Rachel? Rachel smiled. She had thought so.

-Where is Mother? signed Judith.

-At home, with Matthew, signed Rachel.

Judith did not respond. She looked at Rachel for a moment, and then lowered her eyes to the magazine in her lap. Rachel touched her lightly on the chin.

-I am sure she will be here tonight, signed Rachel.

-She has much to do, I know, signed Judith.

Rachel nodded. Then she looked at her watch, and told her sister that she had to be going now-Henry will be getting home from the factory, Mother will have dinner ready and she always raises a fuss when I am late.

Rachel put her hands on Judith's, squeezed them joyfully, smiled, and left the room. As she entered the corridor she saw the nurse walking in her direction. When the nurse saw Rachel she halted, put her hands on her hips and scowled. She then repeated the leave sign, only this time

more forcefully and impatiently. Rachel held up her hand, palm outward, as if to say, I'm going, you just stay put and don't be so bothered, I only went to see my sister. And Rachel turned to leave but not before scowling back at the perturbed nurse. As she got on the elevator Rachel wondered why people treated the deaf like children.

Before catching the bus, Rachel stopped into a department store and bought the record Matthew wanted: the "Sesame Street" one, with Big Bird, Bert, Ernie, and Kermit the Frog. Rachel always acknowledged her gratitude to those little muppets, them and her mother. She brought the record to the cash register behind which the salesgirl was slumped back in a chair, reading. When Rachel set the record down on the counter the girl looked up startled. Rachel handed her a five dollar bill, and the girl rang the purchase, put the record into a bag, gave Rachel the change, and returned to her book before Rachel left the counter.

Rachel stepped onto the descending escalator, rode to the ground level and stepped onto the firm, gleaming terrazzo floor. As she walked toward the revolving glass doors at the far end of the lobby she brushed past a woman in an orange dress who was bent over, shaking a finger at the little girl in front of her. The child cringed and pouted at the mother's threatening gesture. As Rachel drew close to them she knew that the woman was only feigning anger, but the child was truly frightened. She knew because she could sense such things when close to people. She wished there were some way she could tell the child what she knew. But, she thought, she'll learn such things as she grows up.

Rachel went through the revolving glass doors and out onto the street feeling the waves of moist warm air flow across her cheeks. As she walked she felt a heavy pounding noise rising from the sidewalk. The vibrations became more frequent and intense. She looked over and saw a workman jabbing a jackhammer into the street near the curb. The hammer was breaking the pavement into small jagged pieces of concrete. As Rachel came even with the workman she shielded her eyes and walked past him.

The bus was late, so Rachel sat down on the cool cement bench next to the bus stop. She began to think about her mother. Now that Matthew had learned to speak, what would she do? At sixty, her motherhood was finally fulfilled. Matthew was in school and would no longer need her. Rachel felt a sadness come over her when she thought about her mother's future. Maybe it was wrong, she thought, even though it was only for Matthew, maybe it was still selfish. Now that Matthew was in school her mother would be cast into her own private solitude; cast back into the same solitude from which Rachel had retrieved her six years ago. It had been a disguised cruelty but now there could be no disguise. It would be obvious now. She would be certain to realize why her daughter had waited until two years after her husband had died before Rachel had asked her to come and live with them. Her mother was sure to see it all now. And her recognition would bring with it a bitterness and chill which Rachel knew

neither of them could ever bear. But she also knew there was nothing she could do about it. It would be and that was all. Maybe it could be smoothed over. Or maybe, with time, it would be forgotten. Rachel looked up and saw the bus coming down the street: moving slowly, imperceptibly slowly, but in unalterable motion.

She got on the bus and took a seat beside the window next to the sidewalk. As the motor began to churn and the floor to shake, Rachel looked out the window at the man in the telephone booth below her. He contorted his face as though he were shouting, while making rapid and staccato gestures with his free hand. Then he slammed his first down on the small metal counter and slumped against the back of the booth. Rachel saw the paradox. His words were inadequate. They had failed. So he resorted to his hands to restore meaning. But they could not be seen by the person on the other end of the line. The other party could only hear him, yet Rachel could not. Because of the glass barrier between them, a hearing person sitting next to her would not have heard the man either. Yet neither would that person have understood all that she did, she thought. Words were not enough. The man in the telephone booth had proved that. But in her understanding, Rachel also felt a revulsion which made her turn away from the window. She did not know why she felt it but it was there nevertheless.

During the ride home she thought about her mother, Matthew, Judith's baby, the doctor, her own baby, the nurse, the child in the store, the workman with the hammer, the man in the telephone booth, her mother and Matthew. They were all separate, but related too, it seemed to her: related by more than merely the conjunction of time and space of this day.

Each occurred in the outer world of sound, and reached her only in a limited sense. Though she stood apart from each she thought she could still understand, or at least "see", each for what it was and what it represented. Not being able to hear or speak did not lessen her ability to "see." But it was the knowledge that she would always remain apart which undermined any possible conviction that she did, in spite of her affliction, truly know that world. How could she ever be absolutely certain without hearing? And now she realized why the feeling of revulsion at the scene in the telephone booth. The man's words had failed just as her signs had often failed her: failed when she could not express what she felt, and when another person could not understand the signs. Even the written words could not close the gap. She wondered why the recognition did not elate her. After all, she thought, shouldn't it comfort me? But gradually she recognized that she could not be comforted by the knowledge that perhaps no one could truly understand another. She knew with certainty now that if she was afflicted, they, at the very most, were no better off even with voices. But how can I ever be certain of that, she thought. I have never heard or spoken. Nor will I ever. Maybe what I am thinking is not true at all. Maybe they do understand one another perfectly, and I've

exaggerated what I have seen. But how can I know for sure unless I hear? I cannot know! No! I cannot. I am not resentful or envious! I only thank God my child is healthy and can hear.

The bus stopped at the corner, one block from her house, and Rachel got off. She walked along slowly, trying to subdue the uncertain fear welling up inside her. she looked ahead and saw her husband's car in the driveway.

Seeing the car comforted her. Henry's presence always restored Rachel; not because he tried to restore her, but because he never felt the same fears and uncertainties which often entered her mind. He was also deaf and mute, but so were his parents. The affliction had been his from birth, given to him as had been the color of his eyes, and the large knowing hands. He had never known anything but deafness, either in himself or in his parents. There had never been the secret desire, or the exposed lust, for restoration. Henry's silence was irreversible. And when Rachel felt the burden of her own silence she would look at Henry, passive and unburdened, and her uncertainties would fade. She opened the door and walked into the house.

Henry was standing in the dining room holding a small hammer. She walked over, put her arms around him, and squeezed and kissed him. Then she stepped back and signed,-How was your day? Henry gave a diffident shrug of his shoulders accompanied by a slight smile. She continued,-I saw Judith's baby, he is so pretty and I think he looks a lot like Matthew. I acted silly when I saw his ears. I became frightened but then I realized that new babies can look like that. Rachel made a fist and held it next to her ear to show her husband what the baby's ears looked like. Then she looked at the hammer in Henry's hand and she thought of the workman in the city.

-What are you doing with that? she signed.

Henry placed the hammer on the table next to him, and signed, -I am fixing the bell, it does not light up as it should. Rachel looked over at the wall and saw the inside of the bell apparatus exposed as she had never before seen it. It looked as though Henry had disassembled the mechanism before beginning to rebuild it. It was raw and complicated.

-Good, if it is broken we will never know who is at the door, she signed.

-What is the baby's name?

Rachel shook her head and signed, -I don't know, Judith did not tell me.

-It is still early. Maybe he does not have a name yet, Henry signed.

Rachel thought that might be true, but then she remembered how Judith had acted. And she wondered whether Judith had not forgotten to mention his name in her disappointment.

-After dinner maybe you could take Mother and Matthew to the hospital. Judith will be happy to see you, Rachel signed.

-They will not let Matthew inside, he is too young.

-Then you and Mother go, please. Matthew and I will stay home.

-All right, but first I must fix the bell.

He picked up the small hammer and started toward the wall. Rachel looked at him, and before he turned away she moved her lips slowly,- Where are Mother and Matthew? Henry hesitated, looked at his hands, and then pointed with the hammer toward the kitchen.

Rachel walked through the doorway and saw her mother and Matthew sitting at the kitchen table, talking. When they heard her enter they both looked up; Matthew with a playful laughing smile; her mother with a half-smile of recognition. Rachel noticed that dinner was not ready. Matthew jumped up from his chair, ran to her, flung his arms around her thighs, shouting, "Mother, Mother." She knelt down saying, -I missed you so much today, Matthew. I thought about you almost all day. I have a surprise for you. Rachel walked back into the living room, and returned with the record. She gave it to him, and hugged him. He turned to look at his grandmother. She responded with a humble but reassuring smile. Matthew spun back around to face Rachel. His hands began to move rapidly and energetically, and the record slipped to the floor. -Mother, today in school I heard the teacher say . . . .

But he was going too fast now, even for Rachel to follow, so she reached out and took his hands in hers and moved her lips for him to slow down. He frowned and quickly shook his hands free so he could begin again.

-All right, matthew, Rachel signed, tell me what you heard the teacher say, and go a little slower this time. You try to say too much too fast.

-Mother, the teacher said the doctors have a way to give deaf people back their hearing. They can have an operation. She says it's easy and it doesn't hurt. Mother, now you will be able to hear. And speak. And I will speak to you. Oh, Mother, just think. Mom-Mom thinks you should have it, too.

He had become so excited that his body was trembling; he was breathing hard and his eyes had a thin, watery shine to them. Rachel reached out and took his hands into hers again, trying to calm him. She raised her eyes above his shoulder and looked at her mother who had become sullen now but still sat, unmoving, at the empty table. Rachel let go of Matthew's hands, stepped back, and signed, -I have to talk to Mom-Mom first, but right now I want you to go and help your father fix the bell. His hands began to move nervously again, as if they had not understood, -Mother, it won't hurt. And you will be able to hear me. And then, as she patted him lightly, his hands dropped to his sides and he shuffled into the dining room.

Rachel decided she was not going to sit at the table. No, she would stand right where she was. She looked at her mother again and saw that she remained fixed in the same position,as though she had been carved long ago from a single block of opaque stone. Rachel felt her own earlier

thoughts assume a vain, pathetic irony. She had never expected this, least of all today. It was all taking place again.

She was being waved in from the playground or from the falling snow to bathe and put on a clean dress so they could travel into the city to see another doctor, who, after the examination, would slowly shake his head to her mother; and they would leave the office with a different silence between them, which would linger and then fade until the next time they rode the bus into the city. Her mother gradually assumed a more solemn and desperate look until one day Rachel looked at the face and realized that it was so woeful not only from the unrelenting disappointment but from the shame. And Rachel thought she saw the same look beginning to settle upon her own face. So she began to go farther from the house to play, in the hope that her mother would not be able to find her. Rachel thought that if she went into the city again she might not come back: her mother having finally decided that that was the only way. And she sat there on the cold steps of the strange rowhouse six blocks from home wondering, Is she looking for me, she is looking. Soon it was past that time when Rachel had expected her mother to find her. Then she thought that by going so far away she had made it easier for her mother to finally abandon her. So she stood up and started to run home. In a few minutes she looked ahead and saw her mother running toward her, holding a sweater. Rachel did not know what to feel: whether to run to her mother, or to run in the opposite direction. So she just stopped running, and stood there. But her mother had only come to bring her the sweater. There were not more trips to the city. Not only did they never return there, but her mother never again mentioned the doctors. Rachel never understood what had happened. Why had her mother suddenly stopped trying? It was as if those earlier times had never existed.

But nox, now she knew why. Her mother had never really lost her hope. She had only withdrawn it, ceased to pursue it, afraid that it might be extinguished. The failures had battered and deformed it, and eventually forced it deeper inside herself to a place where it could live off itself, unbruised, until the day came when she would revive it. Yes, thought Rachel, it's as if she knew all along that today would arraive; as if she were waiting only for this inevitable day, all the while begetting this conspiracy. My son. What have you done to him?

Rachel walked over to the table and sat across from her mother. The old woman tried to return a smile to her face. She fidgeted with her hands and then slowly sat up against the back of her chair as she adjusted the sweater around her shoulders. Rachel looked at her gently, and for the first time realized that they have never spoken to one another. She also knew now that her mother would live out her life without ever hearing her daughter's voice. Rachel's hands began to move rapidly and continously.

-Mother, what do you know of this operation?

Her mother reached over, took Rachel's hands in hers, and slowly moved her lips, -Rachel, now you are getting too fast. I cannot follow you.

Rachel pulled back her hands and forced a deep sigh. She began again, more slowly this time.

-Mother, what do you know of this operation?

Her mother raised her hands, but hesitated. She lowered them and reached into her sweater pocket. She extracted a pad and pencil and set them between herself and Rachel. Rachel instantly wanted to knock them to the floor. But she did not. She knew she could not do that now. She would use her hand signs and her mother would use the pencil.

-It is true, but it will only work for some, her mother wrote.

Rachel looked up at her in a long fixed gaze as soon as she had read the words. But her mother did not sustain her part of the gaze.

-How did Matthew hear about the operation?, Rachel signed slowly, so her mother would understand.

-In school, as he said, responded her mother.

-Are you sure?, Rachel signed, holding the 'sure' sign fixed in the air so her mother would be certain to grasp her meaning.

-Yes, I'm absolutely sure, her mother wrote, underlining the word, 'absolutely.'

But Rachel did not feel reassured by her mother's added emphasis.

-How long have you known?, Rachel signed, feeling inexplicably very small and selfish as she made the signs.

-Rachel, I told you. matthew heard at school.

-He's only six years old. That is not something a six year old brings home from school.

-Today, schools are advanced. Some children know more than we think they do.

And some parents know more than they admit they do, thought Rachel. She looked at her mother and decided not to pursue her evasion. But her mother continued.

-I know what you think. But you are wrong. I had nothing to do with it, she wrote.

-So many years, so many years it has been, Rachel responded, without having had time to think about what she would say. She felt as though her mother had forced her into being prematurely direct.

-Rachel, honey, the doctors say you can have your hearing back now. the operation will work on you. What's the matter? Don't you want it?

Rachel did not answer. Instead, she wondered what her mother had meant by, "but it will only work for some." She thought a while, and then she knew what those words meant. The operation would not work on her husband. Surgery could not restore hearing to those whose deafness was hereditary. But her mother had not written that. She had disguised it. Rachel felt the afternoon's uncertainity return, only now it was inverted.

She saw that her mother was still writing. When she finished the slow laborious sentence, Rachel read what was on the pad. -Rachel, I am old now, and before I die I want to say to you those things which cannot be written, and I want to hear you say, Mother, Mother. That's all I want now, Rachel. Rachel stared at those words until they became dark, watery shaped in her eyes. Her hands began to twitch, and then felt numb. She did not want to cry, and she forced herself not to. She looked up into her mother's face, and saw that her expression had not changed. There was no sadness, no despair in her eyes which might have been equal to the depth of despair in the words she had written. Rachel wondered whether her mother was feeling those words, or whether she would have spoken them as easily as she had written them. Rachel remembered the disguised, "but it will only work for some," and then she was convinced that her mother was only feigning.

-Mother, I am no longer a child. I am a woman, married with a family; a husband who is deaf, and a child who, thank God, is healthy and who, until today, accepted me as I was. I accept myself. Oh, Mother, Mother, How can I tell you? How can I make you understand me?

Her mother sat, unmoving, but apparently understanding, as she nodded and showed an involuntary smile. She took the pencil and wrote the words which must have been thoughts moments before.

-You are afraid, aren't you, Rachel?

-No.

-Yes, I think you are.

-No. I am not afraid, Rachel signed, making her signs concise and emphatic. But after she had finished she realized that her signs were gone, yet her mother's words remained dark and permanent on the paper between them.

-I'm your mother. I raised you, remember?

-Yes, I remember.

-Don't you think I know when my own child is afraid?

-I don't know, Rachel signed, feeling a confluence of anger and fear rising within her, causing her hands to tremble.

-You were afraid even as a child, her mother wrote.

-That was another fear.

-Fear is all the same, Rachel, there's only one fear-of the unknown.

-No, Mother, it was different then.

-Why do you think I stopped taking you to the doctors?

I never knew. But I was glad you stopped.

-Because you were afraid. I knew it then.

-Only of you, Rachel signed, feeling suddenly buoyed as if an enormous rock had slid from atop her.

-Not of me, Rachel, of yourself. So I decided to let you be, thinking that as you got older you would come to do it for yourself, as I had once

tried. but I was wrong.

-I did. I have a husband and a son who love me.

-I don't mean that.

-Stop this. I am not afraid. I accepted myself.

-No, Rachel. You gave up. There's a difference.

-What would I be going back to? Nothing. I never had it in the first place. It wasn't mine to miss. And what about Henry? What will the operation do for him, Mother?

Her mother wrote nothing on the pad. She only shook her head. Rachel continued, drawing increased strength from her justified suspicion.

-What do I do with him? Leave him there? Just the three of us-you, me and Matthew. No, I won't. It would take me years to learn to speak, more years than I have time for. And the noise. All the sounds there are would suddenly rush into my head and crush me. It is too late, Mother.

-Rachel. . . . .

-No, please. No more words, it's finished. I must think about Matthew. How can I tell him? How can I undo what has been done to him?

Rachel turned toward the dining room, looking for her son and husband. She saw Matthew standing next to his father, holding one of the bell parts while his father tapped the inner workings with the tip of a screwdriver. Rachel turned to face her mother again.

-What do I do? I've never had to face this with him before. How do you tell a child to put something out of his mind?, Rachel signed.

-I don't know that, Rachel, I never knew. But I wouldn't worry. Children have a way of getting over disappointments that we don't have.

Rachel stood up and walked part way toward the dining room when she felt the scraping of a chair on the floor behind her. She looked back and saw her mother rise, pull her sweater tighter around her shoulders as though she were chilled, and begin preparing dinner. Rachel though, I guess it's better that she thinks I'm afraid. Maybe it will help her understand. But Matthew. How can I make him understand? I could tell him that the operation will not help me.

Then she turned and saw that the bell-light was working. Her husband had repaired it, and now, so soon afterward, someone was at the door. Henry smiled when she motioned to him that she would see who was there. Rachel walked through the living room, past the light, impatiently going on, off, then on again. She opened the first door and saw Matthew standing on the other side of the still opened storm door. Standing and looking up at her with an expression on his face, not of supplication, nor of patience, but of endurance: an endurance which Rachel knew would be as implacable as it was effortless. She saw that Matthew was changed now, just as her mother had been changed by that morning nearly thirty years ago. As Rachel looked at him through the glass door she knew what hope his grandmother had just relinquished he had retrieved. The task

had been passed to him. Rachel hoped he would laugh or grin as he often did after looking at her for a long time without signing. But he did not laugh or grin now. He remained fixed, standing in the same rigid position, with his hands clasped behind his back. He was silent.

--Carlye Conover

ALMOST DAWN, JULY 21, 1969

Millions have just clicked off their TV sets;
the first two men on the moon have gone to sleep
exactly one-and four-thirteenths light-seconds
away from the light on our porch. Computers
calibrate their sleep,
but light turns down
up there as down our darkened streets,
and Hamlet begins to whisper in every mind,
not just in the minds of artists and the mad,
'I could be a king of infinite space
Were it not that I have bad dreams.'

--Rod Jellema

The sandcrab digs a hole in the sand
And burrows deep and deeper still.
He is blind to direction and to distance,
And in his blindness he goes forever downward.
He knows not where he is going nor where he wants to go,
yet at some point he senses he can go no
further,
And he sits,
And he waits.
Some sand slides down onto his back
And soon he is covered.
Instinctively he tries to climb back up his tunnel.
A hard struggle.
Slowly.
Up.
He slips a little and continues
Up.
Up.
The sun is above, yet he is insensitive to its rays.
Up.
He reaches the surface and pokes around in the sand.
Where to go?
He crawls several feet.
Stops.
And digs another hole.

--Marc Jaffe

PARAMETERS

I can feel the graphite slipping away
Invading the spacious white
With regulating quadrants of lines.
The curves never interfere
But demonstrate endlessly
To the eyes that there is more

Than one plane
Between two points;

On earth the locus radiates
A sphere inscribed
By an equation tangent to the vertix
parallel to the origin.

x_1 A gift of circles
Inside my scribbled lies
Unity with beer
Pinballs of quarters
Cut paper and perferated tears
The birds fly south.

x_2 There's a lot to be said
For the criminally insane
Only it's illegal
And they
Can't hear us anyway.

x_3 Sometimes they look back
And I don't know what to do
Should I smile
Or just drink on
Losing myself and letting
The fever grow?

x_4 Drunk as shit
The rhymes won't fit
the words don't
Make sense anymore
Neither do the people.

There's no limit
To the dimensions of understanding.
The variables approach a
Single asymptotic point
Describing in time
A solution.

--Paul A. Trimble

A BARMAID'S CONFESSION AFTER SATURDAY NIGHT

Blue lights on faces of dancers
glitter like ice cubes
cracked on metal floors.
Bodies like ice cuges melt
into bulges, the room swells
with their heat

while ceiling drips
toward walls that vibrate in.
I watch sweat crawl
into spaces between dancers
and wait

until the air is so thick
the dancers cannot move.
Still blue-faced,
they wait for me

to cut them loose.
I take my corkscrew
and carve the thick:

One dancer tries to tip me
but I refuse and say

I enjoy watching faces
turn blue.

--Roberta Shore

THERE IS A PIECE OF VIRGIN FOREST AROUND MY NECK. THE LIVING COME WITH EQUAL FELICITY.

In each case the central character
is introduced in the objective
biographical manner against the
sheets, compared as a statement
to that bed restricted by curiosity
and surprise and suspense the
naked man approaches. Let it be
said that splendor and terror are
one, that the night table with
the dead plant is attributed to
the light of blue shade. The
marginal aspects of love are
simple organisms. They are
intentions, techniques and the
business at hand, the tea tray,
the swollen uterus, the persuasion
of great happiness, the roar
against the sky, the decrepit old
woman, the thin air, the feathering
of bones outside when like petals,
all is quiet.

Grace Cavalieri

POETS MANQUE

"An Invompletz Short Story In Two Parts"
Part I: "A Swim with the Porpoises"
Part II. "Another Point of View"

Part I: "A Swim with the Porpoises"

In the late spring of his third senior year at the univeruity, Sidney Lampkins sat under a fern, sadly folding, unfolding, and mournfully refolding his handkerchief on his knee. No doubt, he was savoring his, as of yet, unexecuted literary talents and subsequent autobiography both as seismographic records of earthly extremes to be acknowledged only in posthumous fame. Partially shadowed by a single listless frond, his slack mouth still bore a faded orange stain from Mama Corsi's pizza parlor. And despite his frequent mimetic moans about an early death on an empty stomach or about his lonely vacation, he sat, as always, at the sorority tea in less than anorectic pain and smelling much less of toil and lonely pencil shavings than of oregano and gin. He had splashed the gin on as a skin bracer, one of several authorial devices with which he hoped to be recognized as a serious literary personality.

Earlier, Lampkins had arisen from his unclean bed linen, shadow-boxed to the mall at the center of campus, and squatted, leaning intensely, over a sidewalk puddle. He had produced a small paper boat and with pensive and melancholic eyes had stared for several minutes into the shallow water, noting the reflection of each passerby who lingered or seemingly responded to his behavior with the slightest twist of the mouth or nod of the head. He had sat unmoved by a few careless if not assertive feet. Breaking his concentration only twice to tickle the puddle, he had created a small tidal wave which had encouraged his ship but had distorted his more important mirror.

"Tea Sidney?"

"Ah, tea and your girl-green eyes grand have now my life disturbed..."

"Huh?"

"Rather Miltonic, isn't it?"

"Oh... yea with plenty of sugar, lemon and grain alcohol in it... but the housemother doesn't know anything about it... so don't let on... you know, like if you're really smashed, you'd better leave after this one."

Under the influence of the exotic tea and reassured by Mama Corsi's kitchen and his own delusion, Sidney slipped away, once again, from campus and from imminent examinations, and of course from his literary summons, and bolted for the sunny seashore merely to nurture his lalent.

Nuturance came softly and soon. After a long night's rest and a few hours of sun basking the next day which had left him with a touch of vitality and strained but brightened eyes, he walked into the Aquarium, a handsome lounge, predominantly glass and cushioned throughout with shiny, tufted, black vinyl. Almost methodically, he swept around a piano like curve in the long bar to a tropically sun tanned beauty whose inner strenuousness, he noted, sat in pretty wrinkles on her forehead as she read from a paperback book. Despite the oversized man's white shirt which muted the firm lines between her naked elbows and lovely dark legs, she was unable to conceal her fine outer symmetry. With her elbows planted in the black padding which tailored the mahogany bar, she sat seemingly absorbed with the book, which Sidney was quick to discern as a publication by a new author, **A COUCH TO SHARE** by John D. Baxley. Stirred by the opportunity and warmly reassured by the information on the book jacket about the young author, he made a final adjustment to his tight swim suit and settled down on the stool next to her, placing his wallet, cigarettes, and lighter on the bar.

"Gin and tonic, please." The bartender made one scoop in the ice with a tall glass.

"Excuse me, Miss...uh, are you enjoying my... the book that iy?"

Reading on until she had apparently come to a good breaking point, she looked up first at the bar mirror, then directly at Lampkins.

"Yes," she said and appeared to resume reading.

The bartender pinched a wedge of lime over sidney's drink as he placed it in front of him and as he dropped the wedge into the fizzling tonic, he said, "One dollar fifty, my friend." Sidney passed over a few smaller bills in his wallet and put a twenty on the bar.

"I only asked, Miss, since it has sold rather miserably so far and I only wrote it to..."

"You... you're?"

"Jack Baxley," he conceded with false humility. I threw the 'D' in as there's another John Baxley, maybe you've read some of his..."

"No-no I haven't but you... you're so young..."

"I am young," he took a long swallow of his drink, "twenty-six. I wrote that ust to make some money, on a dare really, but to be able to go on with some heavier stuff. I was a sophomore then at Harvard... but God knows you don't want to hear about that," he said, smiling shyly. "And your name is?"

"Holly Still." Her wrinkled brow smoothed as eagerly as footprints vanish in the surf.

The bartender fanned the bills and secured them with the two quarters on the bar between Sidney and Holly.

"I was lucky and sold it toWarner's... maybe you've seen it?" Sidney pushed the quarters aside as a tip.

"Oh no . . I haven't Jack." She closed the book and turned around,

towards Sidney. His eyes slipped through the partly unbuttoned shirt, seized by her hot pink bikini and the magnificent contrast with her tan. His eyes jerked over to the red letter 'H' which terminated a side seam of the loose shirt at her thigh, the Hathaway trade-mark and a man's shirt for certain, he thought.

"The 'H' is for Holly, Jack," she teased.

As if a little embarrassed, he looked away. "Well the movie was botched in the first three minutes and I walked out and have never seen the rest of it myself.. but I don't want to bore you with... that sort of shop talk."

"Why Jack, I'm simply intrigued. This is one of the first books I've ever picked up since college and you're the only real writer I've ever met .. and I must tell you something... I found you and your book right here at the bar," and as if blushing, "to tell you the truth, a man left it here, about an hour ago, just after I had come in and I've been glued to this stool ever since... Now wouldn't that make a marvelous little story?"

With the wide and serene grin of a trout fisherman, playing recklessly with a surprisingly cooperative rainbow, Lampkins-Baxley said, "Holly dear, I've got some porpoises on a tight schedule and they'll be on this beachfront any minute. May I introduce you to them? Have you ever heard them talk?"

He stood up, adjusted his swim suit, finished his drink, and gathered up his money, wallet cigarettes, and lighter, annoyed that his shirt and trunks were without a single pocket.

Holly followed his hands.

"Come along?"

'Okay, Jack, I'd love to." She extended her graceful hand and he took it gently, as she slipped off the stool.

"Just leave the book, Holly, please."

"No-no, we'll wrap it up in my shirt, Jack, along with your cigarettes and things and we can leave the shirt on the beach somewhere that we can see from the water and be able to glance at it occasionally."

Everything was wrapped up now, Lampkins thought, and she had not once studied the book for any imformation about the author; nor had she cross-examined him about the story itself.

"That'll be fine Holly. I need a reference point anyway. I'm likely to be absorbed with you and the porpoises and drift for blocks down the beach."

He smiled pensively. "You know I make it something of a ritual to swim with the porpoises... I find them restoring... they are truly beautiful, perceptive... artists in their own right. And if I fall off into a daze and lose touch with reality, as I guess you know most of us do, I can trust them to push me back to the shore... to civilization... yet cynics are convinced that they would push you wherever they happen to be going."

Their light, breath-escaping little laughs blended together as they walked out of the lounge. Tenderly, Sidney held onto Holly's elbow as they walked up a few steps from a veranda to a concrete deck around a

pool shaped like a painter's pallette, then down a few wood steps into the sand.

"You have a lovely tan, Jack, and if you had never told me that you're an author... I would have known it... it's your sensitive blue eyes... for some reason, though, I've always pictured writers as pale."

"Well Holly, as you know, we all have somjthing from which we draw out inspiration. For some it's suffering, loneliness, booze... for me it's the sun. I've seen all the sunrises of my life. But let's not talk about me and writing. I'll never get off the subject...I'm different in that respect, you know most writers don't say much, afraid they'll lose something in conversation ... but I think it's often the source of my stuff."

Holly took a deep breath and released it as if relaxing. She squeezed Baxley's hand and kicked up sand, lightly, as they approached the water.

"You are so warm and refreshing, Jack, and I can tell you see so far into things."

"You're sweet, Holly, but I hope I haven't made you feel as though I've been looking straight through you."

"No-oh-no..." She lingered. "Jack... why don't we put the shirt here just a few feet in back of the lifeguard's stand. We'll be able to spot it easily."

"Okay... fine Holly..." The author's eyes were already out to sea and he spoke abstactedly.

Then as they walked up even with the lifeguard's stand, Holly said, Look, there's one, Jack, isn't it?" She pointed up the beach to their left with her arm in front of Baxley who had turned just as she had desired and with her right hand she had brushed the sun-bleached hairy leg of the lifeguard.

"Did you see it, Jack?"

"No...no honey..I didn't," he said apologetically, still gazing into the distance. "Well, doll, let's go on in."

Hand in hand, they ran into the surf and jumped the first breaker and dived into the next; and as they had run into the surf, the lifeguard had lowered himself into the sand and just as they had dived, he opened his Hathaway shirt and Sidney Lampkins' wallet and left him only his identification. He climbed back up on his stand. Holly had gained a few strokes on Lampkins as they had surfaced and he swam in hot pursuit.

Part II: "Another Point of View"

Quite frankly, I feel the author was somewhat remiss not to include me earlier, for as you will soon learn, I was on the veranda, you do recall, at the Aqarium; and further, I have reasons to believe that the author has preferred to suppress my talents all along. But if I have pursued little else

in my interesting and thus far rich life with steadfast, unwavering, tenacious commitment, I surely have pursued the pleasures of a good heart and accordingly I forgive the author and all those who have not yet acknowledged my literary merits.

Now then, I knew all about Lampkins and was well aware of his earnest, indefatigable obsession to be a writer; and being of previously mentioned soft heart and gentle pen, I took it upon myself to lend a hand, sometime before the veranda, you'll see.

I had long been pleased by the spirit of my own letters and determined it well-nigh time to exploit heated narrative and the sensuality of a fine fountain pen squeaking over luxurious linen. At first the pen seemed to slip along too quickly, and I judged the results to lack texture despite the excellent paper and my own superbly baroque calligraphy. My narrative was, shall we say, tepid, but not nearly warm enough for a bedtime snuggle, even in this cozy decade of easy sleeping.

Well then, I borrowed some rather brownish yellow, pulpy paper from a young friend returning about mid-tea, the other day, from grammar school. I began, at once, to heave a sound pencil tightly between those small logs which lay at awkward angles throughout it. Twisting out penetrating prose, I left the paper wizened and wrenched up like an old, obscene face. But being of a persistently gentle nature and very much a grandiloquent chap of only occasional truculence and thesaurus, I continued, and soon my pencil acquired a certain facility and charm, lacking then, form and mere subject matter.

From an anonymous distance, I found both in Mr. Sidney Lampkins and distantly embraced him with the artistic empathy and strict detachment of Johnson's Boswell. With a splendid variety of distinctive pads and pens, I followed him about, pausing under a tree near a sidewalk puddle, or peeking through sorority house windows, and most recently and briefly, eavesdropping from the veranda of the Aqarium, all along in a sweltering passion to sit down and comfortably record chapter after chapter of the story which Sidney had not time, nor energy, nor the self-discipine to write himself. I saw a great twentieth century picaresque novel swelling right before my very own eyes.

In following Lampkins, I soon procured a collapsalbe light weight settee, in which, at this precise moment, I have settled rather fatuously into the sand. I am some thirty paces from the benevolent guardian of life who has most profitably saved young Lampkins from total immersion into the authorial role of John or Jack Baxley, I assume, from what I could see and deduce from the veranda earlier, their voices muffled frequently by the nearby sea.

At this point, Sidney is salty-mouthed and spellbound and tenderly pursuing that extraordinary dolphin, herqelf, Miss Still. Of course Sidney is yet soaking himself as Baxley, but shortly he qqll have his eet deep into the truthfully scorching sand and perhaps will have experienced that

sudden renewing, ridding, soul-cleansing sensation of the sea bath.

Sinking further into my apricot striped setee, I should like to spill out a bit of information about myself. I have never worked, I assume, in that I have never been pressured nor have I ever experienced the drudgery that work connotes. My sixty-two years have been eased by a most considerate father through what is popularly described as a blind trust, but it has been through his marvelous vision that the trust has expanded, and my allowance if you will, regularly increased. Having retired at birth, I have known nothing akin to regret or remorse. Much as I emerged at birth, I remain nakedly gloating, excessively so today, in this generous sun.

Have you not detected a certain stoutness in my structure? It is a gracious fact that I am large and I very much resemble the late Sydney Greenstreet. Actually, we shared the same magnificent tailor for years. My head melts softly atop, slouches kindly at my ears, then sinks swiftly and smoothly into reddened cheeks which hang and sway as do a spaniel's. From there I progress into increasingly broader ripples and having little hair anywhere, I am quite shiny.

I have never been to war. I helped F.D.R. underwrite the last big real one. You might enjoy contrasting me with that worldly and bearded American writer and ex-patriate, now deceased, whose self-imposed rugged life seemed to have been engraved on his imposing body, leaving a swell not resembling Greenland at almost precise longitude and latitude upon his forehead. I, on the other hand, have led a narrow life which I have filled out at every glorious opportunity, achieving a pink patina, unengraved and unaltered by wars or a harsh education.

I see well with colorless eyes and I am delighted to report at this moment that a genuine school of seemingly playful dolphins have surfaced and remain perhaps fifty yards out to sea from our friends Baxley and Still. Baxley appears quite unaware of them. I can observe these details in spite of a painful glare from the white sand and glistening sea, not only because I enjoy near perfect vision, but i enjoy the soft shade of my palm leaf hat, the snout of which was superbly constucted by a gentleman who requires a brief digression. I greatly admire him.

We met over a glass of claret at the poolside bar of the Sin City Motel, in Miami Beach. A chap himself, of near sixty years, he rises early everyday, climbing palm trees and fetching fresh green leaves, just those which are supple and long, and only enough to get him through the morning. He can weave a hat of almost any design and dimension in fifteen or twenty minutes and at noon, oblivious to pleading arms flailing from chaise lounges surrounding the oceanside pool, he retires faithfully and worthily to his claret and subsequent nap. I have always been taken with this now sun-bleached hat and with that gentleman's very gratifying, well organized life.

Now let me see, oh yes, it is Baxley, that is Lampkins, who has changed

his stroke, after a long convincing writer's daze on his back. Once again, he is trying to get closer to Miss Still, who it seems has kept him out to sea quite deliberately. For the lifeguard has now completed his tour of duty and has been relieved by a young man equally influenced by the sun's rays: his sunbleached hair and dark tan create the same reverse effect of the negative image in the photo development process. Before Miss Still's friend had departed, however, he had executed a bit of amusing semaphore which having spent many hours, myself, on most of the beaches of North America, I was able to interpret: "S O S stop PISS CALL stop SEND JOHN stop QUIT EARLY TODAY stop GOT HOT DATE stop BE BUDDY."

Meanwhile, author Baxley, poor swimmer Lampkins has made a futile effort to catch a mammoth wave which had been swelling for some time in back of him. Not well timed, he at the last instant got just ahead of the crest of the wave, was pulled under decisively and slammed against the fast receding sand. Somehow through it all, he had apparently maintained near perfect body-surfing form, as he emerged thoroughly sand-scraped: nose, chest, knees, and both large toes; and bleeding slightly, everywhere, he struggled to his feet.

Miss Still had caught the same wave gracefully anf seemed thrilled as she rode it in and recovering smartly to her feet, she skipped out of the surf.

I have grown quite uncomfortable and perhaps alarmed by an ominous cloud settling with a fuddfn chill on this once promising beachfront and setting, and the story had ended qo well long begore Lampkins tried to get out of the water that I am inclined to put him back there and leave him there for good. There now.

Sidney Lampkins, back in the water, floated forever.

--Lawrence Angle

WORDS

The secret is the soul of its kind,
red by dawn,
gray in the afternoon.
Night after night
I shine the light on a book.
The stories are separated,
the words considered.
If shiny and weightless,
they are stored
in a thousandth
of a thousandth of a point,
revolved and settled into new order.

--Joyce Merritt

THE MIND BODY DEBATE

Some mornings
it seems impossible
to have lived
in the same one's person
so long.

After all
what is a body
but a house full of traps:
a bone, a toggle switch,
ten dead ends in fingertips,
a rasp, a skip, a slide?

And what is the mind
but the eye of its shadow:
a voice, a twisted old crow
who'll never touch ground?

One can't very well wait
for the truce
when there's no sign
of compromise
or matter of truth,
no way to decide
who's been locked up
in who
and how long they have
been lying.

--Judith Harris

NIGHTS LIKE THIS

Everything I have ever written
stands as a testament
to my longing for company
on nights like this.

Ego, dear audience,
my sweet aunt
for whom there is nothing,
ever, to forgive,

testify to our
sentimental union,
our mutual compact
not to see too clearly,

to pretend a past
we never lived,
together or apart,
locked as we have been

in all this distrust,
of each other,
disgust,
disappointment.

Tonight I summon
only your silence.
Let it reverberate
through my house.

It is not the blank page
that frightens us,
it is the blank sound
that surrounds us.

--Edward Gold

ANTS

Consider this: they may outlive us
if their narrow chain of change doesn't break
as we imagine ours does.
And so, at times, we worry
over this distant stasis of fixed place
when the sun stays at an always hour.
The end of evolution begins with dissolution.
Or more, perhaps, the end is a continuing
without us. And so, at times, we worry.
But aren't there worries more immediate than ants,
more immediate than death coming, when,
whenever it comes the world adjusts
and adjusts: deaf and dumb
to our microscopes,
to our prayers rising into the atmosphere,
upward into the ionisphere
without amens. Are you afraid?

If we laugh they'll never hear us
but the sound fills a space.

--Diana Vance

Ants. small. how small they seem. how has the modern moundsman arrived from his prehistoric dream? is he intact with those millenium that crawled over dinosaur hips and backs? will the ancient components work in our modern scheme? how far away they are, down to the ground and crawling still. they seem to be heading toward the hill. ants. so small. such little bits. they may outlive us but they won't outlast us. they have longevity only in name. why worry who will win. only one side knows. the ants though, don't give a shit for fame or any special consideration, or for anymore than a hill and food to continue their long unknowing chain.

let me be in little pieces too, parts may survive for as long as there's something to chew. adjustment is always necessary. and death. and dying. and ants. i have smashed many with my thumb. i have left them lifeless in this confusion. ants were aped long ago. who did they ape? they are what is survived. why do you laugh to fill a space? most ants would run at the sound of your voice, just as you flinch from an ant on your hand. more is not necessary. longer is undesired. we have trouble filling the spaces we have. we do not require sand to grit our teeth. we don't need a long chain. the only thing that matters will. we don't have to invent inadequacy, nor prostitute fear, nor pervert ants. we don't need holes. what lies we invent to eat up we have to live on.

--Joe Brennan

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